

Paul B. Johnson, Jr.
meeting in Natchez with city officials

November 2, 1964

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
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JOHNSON:

...is to lay all of our cards on the table. The trouble that we've had over there at McComb has, more or less, highlighted to the rest of the country the fact that we cannot handle our own business at home. We feel that we can, but the rest of the country don't feel that way. And I am down here for the purpose of finding out actually what the conditions are here locally and in the county, and whether or not you feel that you can handle the situation. If you can't handle the situation, I believe I can. And, if you don't handle the situation, I going to be forced to come in and handle it. Now, that's the thing I do not want to do, because, in the first place, I do not want to usurp any of the prerogatives of the local officials. I can come in here under the emergency proclamation with a beefed-up patrol and with the full police powers of the patrol. Or else, I can declare martial law. If I do either one of those, it's going to be a reflection on the mayor, on the sheriff, on the district attorney as a part of his district, the county attorney, the chief of police and everybody else. And that's the thing we want to keep from doing. Now, I'm also in a position to give you whatever help that you feel that you need. The other thing that I wanted to bring up...the other thing that I wanted to bring out is that, if you feel that there are ways that I can be of assistance to you down here in addition to what we have already been doing and to back you up in your efforts, then, certainly, we want to do that without coming in here and appearing to the public that we're taking over. The other thing that I wanted to say is, if there are any political or any prejudices or any petty jealousies between any of the law enforcement groups in this county and you all feel that you can't set those aside for the best interest of the state of Mississippi, then it will force me to come in here. And if there are any differences, that is one reason for us being here. We need to lay those differences right out there on the table and to not have any friction whatsoever as between the state police, the sheriff, the chief of police, the constables or deputy sheriffs or anyone else. This is a time of all times when all of our folks have got to stand together and work together as we have never done before, because this thing, frankly, is a thousand times more serious than you all believe it to be. Not because of what we know about this area, but because of what we know will happen if we don't locate these people and see that they are prosecuted. And the politics with me is out the window. And, if there are people in Mississippi that don't like what I'm doing, as long as I'm standing up for law and order, they can go jump in the lake any time as far as I'm concerned. And if it's a matter of losing votes or losing friends or anything else, that don't mean a [inaudible] to me. Naturally, I'd like to have all the friends I can, but, if they're going leave me because I'm determined that law and order is going to prevail, then they can just leave. Now that's the way that I feel about it, and I would like very much to hear from you all as to what you feel the situation is, what help you feel you need, whether or not you feel that you're all working together can

accomplish this task and can run these people down and bring them to justice. I'd like to start off by calling on...we can start here with the Chief of Police, Officer Robinson.

ROBINSON: Governor, I appreciate and I have talked to Virgil and I assured him the full cooperation of my department. And that goes for anybody that can help us catch the ones that are responsible for these bombings around here and these fire [inaudible]. I feel like that I'm capable with the help of the state and with the federal government. The federal government has helped us some with this thing. And I've been in law enforcement going on 19 years, and I've seen some rough ones, but this is about as rough as I've seen. And I don't think Mississippi has had any of these kind of things before [inaudible] civil rights deal. Now, I personally believe...and this is just my own belief...that this is not a civil rights deal down here. That this is more political than it is civil rights. I feel like there's some groups that are against Mr. Nossor and there's some against me. And I feel like I know they put out letters on Mr. Nossor, and they even put out a letter on me. And Governor, we've had hell getting the people to tell us anything. I mean, we've had eye witnesses to one shooting here where a sign was shot, and the lady...two ladies told us that all they could tell us it was a car. That's all. She didn't say white, colored or what.

JOHNSON: Who do you feel is doing this down here?

ROBINSON: Governor, I'll tell you. From investigations that we've conducted, I feel like that the Klan is split up from a big klan to some...I call them renegade klans. Yes sir. And I feel like it's one group that's doing it against another group. And I've been threatened...my family has. I haven't been threatened personally, but my family has. And after Mr. Nossor's house was bombed, I got a call...my youngest boy answered the phone...and told him that my house was next. Of course, you can't say...I can't say they won't do it. But I personally don't believe that I...the only thing that I've done is try to catch the ones that's done it. And if they're going to bomb my house for trying to catch them, they going to have to bomb it, 'cause I'm sure going to try to catch them.

JOHNSON: Do you have any leads of any particular people that you're...

ROBINSON: Governor, we don't...yes, sir, there's not any leads, Governor. This is from information that we've received and it's some people that we've been watching, and they seem to be out every time that something like this happens. And I've had them [inaudible] hoping that they would try something, and, maybe, we'd catch them dead in the act.

JOHNSON: How many police do you have?

ROBINSON: I've got 41 counting myself and I mean that's women and school guards and all. I don't have but eight men on a shift. That's where the bad part comes in.

JOHNSON: Have you tried to change the shifts say to 12-hour shifts instead of eight-hour shifts?

ROBINSON: I have been working them overtime.

JOHNSON: Which would give you more men on each shift.

ROBINSON: Yes sir. I've been working them over...yes sir. And Governor, I have tried and I ride a lot myself at night. And I've tried to be in certain places and you know how you try to get a premonition that something's going to happen and you try to be there. 'Course, you can't outguess these criminal [inaudible]

JOHNSON: Do you feel there are any members of the...your police department who are associated with or are members of this...these [inaudible] of these Klan groups here?

ROBINSON: Yes sir.

JOHNSON: You do?

ROBINSON: I sure do.

JOHNSON: What have you all been able to do about it?

ROBINSON: Governor, I don't have any first-hand information that they are members other than I've talked to the FBI on some of the activities of some of them and, if they are not active members, they are sympathetic.

JOHNSON: Well, do you try to assign them to places where they will not be in the way and where they...

ROBINSON: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

JOHNSON: ...won't get information that they might [inaudible]

ROBINSON: Right. I'll tell you, Governor, you know, I have always contended that a police department to be informed has got to be informed of all of its members. But some information I'm getting now, I can't let out. I just absolutely can't let it out. Just to a few. And I've got some loyal men, I've got some dedicated policemen, that's some professional policemen. And I've got some who's always looking for something better to come along,

and that's the ones that I'm afraid of. And I mean, as far as political differences, Governor, I run. I didn't have any money when I run. And I'm just...I'm obligated to the people. I'm not obligated to any group or anything. I'm just obligated to the people, because they're the ones that voted me in. And I didn't promise anything but a good law enforcement and that's all I can say I'm going to give. And I'm going to live up to that oath.

JOHNSON: Have you had any association at all with the Klan as such?

ROBINSON: No, sir. None. I've had some informants that has informed me on the Klan, but they're afraid...they're afraid to give you any information.

JOHNSON: Lenox, what do you think about this? You're the District Attorney in this...

FORMAN: Well, Governor [inaudible] ...

JOHNSON: [inaudible] prosecute the daylights out of them if you got them.

FORMAN: I am not very familiar with the local situation in Natchez. As you know, I live in Franklin County. But of course I'm just a vitally interested in this situation as though it was in my home county.

JOHNSON: [inaudible].

FORMAN: It does. It's possible that there are memberships of this organization that we're talking about are right out of my home county over there. I don't know anything about the political differences over here. I haven't been closely associated with any of that. I'm in the dark as to any of the differences that might affect this thing. But it strikes me now just from what the chief has said here, I'm wondering if it couldn't be worked to more advantage by the use of some men out of the Colonel Birdsong's department in here undercover work with this thing that we could break this situation somehow. It's pretty obvious that there...every move that is being made by the law enforcement agencies here seem to...they know where they are every time they move. To come in to bomb the Mayor's house in the city of Natchez, to me, it sets up that they knew where every policeman was at that time or something. And for that reason, it may be that they're handicapped. I'm not saying that they're being negligent [inaudible] this man by any means. But it's just a situation that he's not being able to cope with because of that. And is it possible that we could get help out of your department of men that could come in here, undercover men that would help [inaudible] this thing?

JOHNSON: Yes, we could put additional men in here. You see, we came in here about five months ago. I've had two men working in this area for some time. We have over 3,900 names of the members of the Ku Klux Klan in the state

compared to the FBI's 163. We know worlds of these people in here, and we've been building on that. And the FBI has exchanged information except that we haven't given these names out to the FBI because I wanted to deal with my own home people. And we've had several informers in here. We've had several detectives in here, plain clothes men. Some of them, finally, were around here so much people thought they lived here, and we turned around and sent others in here. Then, as you know, we sent some down there to Woodville, and they has this trouble down there. And we could very easily send some additional undercover men in here. As a matter of fact, we've got some in here now. And we have them in here because they were invited in and were welcomed.

FORMAN: Well, now, as I say, we're in here laying our cards on the table so far as I'm concerned about it. As to be able to call any names, I can't. But I'm like the chief here that this is a group of fellows that have broken off probably from what, maybe, the Klan, itself, stands for. And he may have his idea about who they are. Those names, I think, who he thinks they are, the sheriff over here should be given somebody that can put these men under 24-hour surveillance and, maybe, through that medium, we can get some...catch them in some act on this thing.

JOHNSON: Because we have got to run these people down.

FORMAN: I agree with you.

JOHNSON: If we don't, all of us are blowed up.

FORMAN: Yes, sir.

JOHNSON: And it's not just a matter of just a local situation. It's a matter of it affecting the entire state.

FORMAN: I had an idea that this thing might even have a chain reaction from the ones that's already been apprehended on it. That there might be a connection right on in through this...

JOHNSON: We're working through all of that.

FORMAN: Yeah, sure are. Well, anyway in the world that I can help, I'm willing to cooperate with these fellows. I think they know that. Anytime they've ever called on me, I'm happy to do anything I can. And I agree with you that we should do it ourselves. And these boys will do it, but there's some way they're being...obvious to me...that they're being taken advantage of that they're a victim of circumstances. I wouldn't for one minute say that it's due to their indifference to it. It's because I'm afraid that there's some contacts that keep him on the spot that he don't even realize through this

thing, because it's...and the sheriff's department probably the same way. Now, that's just my reaction to...

JOHNSON: See, the action of the sum of this group has been to infiltrate, say, the police or the sheriff's department or any...or the mayor's office or anywhere else, but, when they do, they begin to create suspicion and friction among the law enforcement officers themselves. And that's what destroys your law and order first.

FORMAN: That's the reason I was thinking it's this outside source [inaudible]

JOHNSON: If there's any of that friction that exists between any of the local officials, for the welfare of themselves and their families, they better lay it aside today. And I don't mean tomorrow.

FORMAN: That's right. Well, if there's any existing between my office or personally with these gentlemen, I know nothing of it. We've had this...

JOHNSON: If there is, you want to hear it.

FORMAN: That's right. I've had splendid cooperation from them on anything I've ever called upon them to do.

JOHNSON: Mayor Nosser, what about you?

NOSSER: [inaudible] ideas. My idea of this, Governor, if what's happening in Natchez today is happening in Jackson or Cleveland or any other town in the state of Mississippi, they could not possibly cope with the situation. They're going to have to have help from the state. And I'm for having a patrolman here, and they can stay here until those people are apprehended. I'll tell you why. Governor, by the presence of these troopers down here have given a new life to all of our people. They were scared to death and they didn't even want to go out at night. They were scared to go out in the daytime. Many and many a lady has called me and said that, after five o'clock, they just don't want to go anywhere. They're scared to go anywhere. But, even in the daytime, they don't want to let the kids go out and play like they used to. So, the presence of the troopers here is essential to the moral of our people. And, in the meantime, the presence of the [inaudible] investigators is very essential to catch those people. Now, as far as catching these people, gentlemen, we had...we got enough crime committed in this city and county to be able to catch these people if we're ever going to catch them. Why pull the troopers out of here and have some more bombings so they can come back here and investigate. I think getting the troops out of here is not wise, Governor. I don't believe it's wise. If so...if any change at all, we ought to have more of them here so that people can go on normally about their business, day and night. And, in the

meantime, crimes have been committed. And, if these secret service men and our people and the state people and the federal government people cannot catch those people, well, you're not going to catch them after they inflict more violence on the people. So the troops...the troopers are essential to stay up here. Their stay is very essential to the peace and to the condition...healthy condition of this community. I've had letters from Louisiana, here from Louisiana right next door to us, the ladies are afraid to come down here. And it's killing our economy. And you pull the troopers from up here, you just as well write Natchez off as a ghost town. And we need your help, Governor. We need your troopers down here. We need every bit that you've got until those people are apprehended. And, as far as working together, I don't think you have to worry about that at all. The Chief, the Sheriff, and I are working hand in hand with your troopers, with your men in every way, shape or form. And what happened to been some small misunderstanding in the past between the Sheriff or the Chief, between the Chief and I, are just all gone. And I'm telling you what I know. We're all working as one team now with one goal. These people ought to be apprehended or else this town is going to pieces. We've got industries coming here. We've got [inaudible] coming here. I don't believe we'll ever land them up here, because of the conditions that exist here. Businesses, these merchants up here, they [inaudible] the businesses off. I know about the [inaudible] of the business. Business [is off] in this whole community, and I know why. [inaudible] people living across the river in neighboring counties are scared to come to Natchez, gentlemen. They just won't come to Natchez anymore. Some of them won't. And until these people are apprehended, you ain't going to find anybody who'll come to Natchez.

JOHNSON: [That's what] killed Little Rock. Killed them dead as a mackerel and they stayed dead for four...over four years. People's business went to pot. People moved out of there. They couldn't get industry to come in. People were upset and excited, scared, all that sort of thing. And to sit back and allow a handful of little old hoodlums to get by with this sort of stuff is a reflection on everybody in Adams County.

NOSSER: There's no question about it. One more thing I want to tell you, Governor. You talking about politics. There's no politics in this regardless of what is the cause of what's going on. What's going on is bad.

JOHNSON: You wish now you hadn't been elected mayor, don't you?

NOSSER: Sir?

JOHNSON: You kind of wish now you hadn't been elected to [inaudible]

NOSSER: Well, I [inaudible] I knew that this thing [inaudible]. I wouldn't have been

in public office at all. But I'll tell you one thing. You talking about politics. You...you going to gain more friends by establishing peace in the state of Mississippi than you ever had before. Because the handful of people who are against peace and order are very few. The great majority of our people here in Natchez and McComb and all of the state of Mississippi are peaceful people.

JOHNSON: That's 99 percent.

NOSSER: Yes, sir. They want peace and order. But they're scared, Governor, they're scared, and we don't want any federal troops down here. Now, listen, there's nothing that the federal troops can do that your troopers and the National Guard can't do in here. We certainly don't want no federal troops down here. And if the state can't keep peace, then let's all leave the state of Mississippi.

JOHNSON: Well, that's true of the local officials and local authorities.

??? The thing that I'm very much concerned about is that we getting these men in the [inaudible] in our counties.

JOHNSON: Correct.

??? And when they infiltrate those, now, brother, they've got us tied by the throat, now, when they get that situation.

JOHNSON: Now, we've got this criminal cynicism law now that also applies to sedition. And we see these members [inaudible] klans. They know nothing about it, and they don't realize how long they'd have to stay at Parchman if we caught them, see? It's not a one year proposition. It's not a six months, and it's not a 500 dollar fine. But this thing carries one hell of a ...

??? penitentiary offense.

JOHNSON: ...penitentiary sentence. And we're determined they're going to go there, or they're going to have to leave Adams County, one or the other. We've been working on this thing too long. For over six months. But our work has been hampered. It's been deterred. But, now, we're expecting everybody to get in and work together on this thing and, if they get any information, they need to give it to each one of the law enforcement officers. And it may be that we may have to set up a...an information center locally and have one of our state officers in there handling the situation there and assigning these leads so that the sheriff's office won't overlap with the chief of police's office, and you have both groups out there working on one lead. And you're killing yourselves to a great extent by a lot of overlapping of duties.

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Governor, I have seen that. That's happened here.

JOHNSON: Yes. Well, it's happened in McComb. It's happens anywhere.

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Well, I tell you, I find a lot of [inaudible] has been brought up between law enforcement agencies and the mayor. I mean it just...you can feel it.

JOHNSON: But that's the whole idea. That's what they're driving at. If they can't divide the law enforcement officers, they can't accomplish anything. And that applies to this Negro COFO group the same way. Now, what we're doing it letting a handful of little white people do what COFO's been trying to do all the year. To divide our people, and, when they do, we blow it up. Officer Thomason, you've been down here, and I'd like to here from you on what's your ideas on trying to solve this thing.

THOMASON: Well, Governor, I believe that you've probably hit, I think, on one of the best things that's come up yet is I would like to see that information center going on and established, because we have been doing a lot of overlapping. We have been doing a lot of interrogating the same people. And we've had that situation arise just yesterday, whereby we had an appointment with a subject and didn't know that another department had an appointment with the subject, so, therefore, we don't know what they got. I believe this was a federal agency that was interrogating at the same time that we were supposed to had contact with them. Now, this thing seems to revolve around a few given people in this area. And, when you go to talk to somebody, they start to naming about these same persons all the time. And, but nobody's willing to give you any concrete evidence. It's all...they believe it. But, to come up with a definite lead or a definite clue, we haven't been able to come up with a definite clue. Now, the thing that we have been doing down here since we've been down here in this situation, and I have a record of every person that we have stopped since we've been down here. I have got the men to log the time, his location, description of his automobile and all the pertinent data on his driver's license and so forth. And I write this up each day. And we go over this against a checklist that we already have to see if any of these people that we are suspecting are out at that time of the night or if we're running across any of them. And we are checking for the explosives and what have you in their vehicles.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea where these explosives are coming from?

THOMASON: No, sir, I don't. We are hoping to get a report back today, I believe, from a...a lab report that was sent off to the FBI on the type explosives that was used, I believe, involving Mayor Nosser's house. Is that right?

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Yes, we hadn't got it back yet.

THOMASON: Hadn't got it back yet.

JOHNSON: They've got a new type of explosive that they're using now called [firelight]. Sort of a putty.

THOMASON: Yes, sir.

JOHNSON: And we picked up a box that it came in over there in McComb. It's a Spanish-type, Latin American explosive.

THOMASON: Well Governor, just from reading the paper, that case was more or less, broke on one of your men being...observing one man, keeping him under surveillance, wasn't it?

JOHNSON: Correct.

THOMASON: That's the thing that I was thinking that we could work here that we can eliminate down. Like he says, now there's a certain group that's under suspicion about it. We can keep that group under close surveillance.

JOHNSON: And it would be well for them to keep particular surveillance on the people from other counties, surrounding counties, and across the river coming in here. And how often they come in. And what times of the night that they are in here. Because, what they'll do, they'll get somebody from outside the county to come in and do this and go back to their county. And we're working now in an ever widening circle back toward McComb, and we're combing all of these counties down in here that are tied in with Adams County thinking that, well, knowing that we're going to be able to come up with something, because this bomb...this dynamite that was used down here at Bude, we didn't miss it 20 minutes, see. And it was here in a [inaudible] of a fellow's house. They watched the store here for a long time thinking they were going to use it on him, on a Negro store. And, when I sent my officers down there to Baton Rouge and Zachary, Louisiana, to interrogate this Negro woman who was practically a witness to the killing down in Woodville, that's when they shot this place over there at Bude. And they had moved it, in the meantime, to a fellow's farm who lives here in this town...had moved it out on his farm in Franklin County. But all of that dynamite has not been used up. And there was about 327 sticks of it that was in his [inaudible]. The FBI didn't go in there, because they wouldn't have had anything but just dynamite, a minor charge. They'd been watching to see if he used it. This information center that we could set up would be available for all agencies, including the FBI men. And they are moving a lot of FBI men into this area now, and somebody's going to have to come up with the dough. And, when you put the money out, you're going to get the information. And the FBI has got it to put out and are letting it be known. And so are we. And we're going to get the information. We're going to get

these people if we have to stay here 'til May of next year. A lot of things that are done, I know there's some people that don't like it, but we can't help that.

[Question or comment made, but inaudible]

JOHNSON: Sheriff, what do you think of the situation?

[Break in tape]

??? ...complaining about it. He just exonerated the officers in every detail by statement [inaudible]

??? He sort of spanked them, didn't he?

??? And it wasn't a thing in the world except he tried to bluff them 'til old big [inaudible] walked up and told him to get his butt out of the car or he'd jerk it out.

[All speaking at one time, most inaudible]

??? 'Course, Governor, he was wrong and, when he wore a badge, he was wrong. If anybody wants to search my car, and I know what they're doing, if the state troopers or if the deputy sheriff wants to search my car and stop me, I'll get out and let them search it.

JOHNSON: That's what everybody down here has got to understand that the searchers have got to cooperate. It's not a question of humiliating anybody. It's a question of narrowing this thing down.

??? Governor, I'll tell you, I've had two or three inquiries which I've handled by putting the...it's their obligation to cooperate with us and with the state in trying to apprehend these [inaudible], because I told them, if troopers are in here, soldiers, they don't mind. You don't know what martial law is until you see it and get in it [inaudible].

JOHNSON: [inaudible] tell you that, from a historical standpoint, martial law begins with the courts. So you're through if troops come in here.

??? Governor, I want to make another statement. I think the coloreds here in this town ought to be thanked for their cooperation and their peaceful intentions with the exception of a handful of people up here. All those colored people are peace-loving citizens...

JOHNSON: The only thing that has kept us from already going under in this state is that they hadn't been able to organize the local Negroes in Mississippi.

ANDERS:

You want to know what I have to say? I got the best night's sleep that I have gotten since January sixth last night. I went to bed at 7:30 and I woke up this morning at 7:30, because I knew we had the troopers out. I knew that, if anything was going on, they'd find it. We were going to lay our cards on the table, and this is what I think. I think that, of course, you know we made an arrest on the little Negro that was shot over here. I don't know if we'll ever prove it or not. I think the man was there when the little Negro was shot. We didn't hesitate to arrest him, and we would have some more had we found them. Then, we came along and we had some church burn...churches burned. I think the first two churches were burned by splinter groups of the Ku Klux Klan. Then, I think the other churches, two churches, a church and a lodge, were burned because of insurance and by the own [Negroes] trying to get their churches put back. They were little churches. They had insurance more than enough to put back a better church than they had already. And, the next morning as soon as the church was burned, it was out collecting insurance. But I do think that the first two churches were burned by the Klan. As for this bombing that we've had in Natchez in the last two or three weeks, I think that was strictly political. I don't think either of the gentlemen, which was J. T. and Mr. Nosser, knew anything about it. And I'll tell you what I think about it. We had an NAACP meeting. We had, I think, nine local Negroes out to attend that meeting. We had two white reporters that came along with them. J. T. told them they could not go in there. It was a Negro meeting, so they couldn't go in. The next day, they came up and interviewed the Mayor. He was misquoted about being about....the police department being bad. Mr. Art Metcalf was also interviewed, and he was talking about the police department was terrible, just terrible, I think was the word that was used in that. The report came back to Natchez on Tuesday. On Sunday night, stink bombs were thrown in Mr. Nosser's two stores, and thrown in Jordan Auto Company which was used...which was owned by Mr. Art Metcalf and the two stores by Mr. Nosser. The following Wednesday, for no reason whatsoever, a letter came out on the Chief over there, about him sleeping with Negroes, having Negroes in his cars, the payoffs he was getting, getting payoffs from Nellie Jackson, a known Negro prostitution in a house in Natchez. And, then, on the following Friday night, the Mayor's house was bombed. Two groups that are in sympathy with these two men that they knew nothing about, I think, was causing all the trouble. I think they did every bit of it. As for the highway patrol in here, I have seven men working in my department all the time, and how many...how many hundreds of miles do we have?

???

471.

ANDERS:

471 miles of road. It's impossible for me to do it. I went to the bank the

other day and borrowed 9,000 dollars to run my office on from now until the first of the year because of the extra help and things that I've hired during this year. It's impossible for me to do it down here like this.

JOHNSON: Are you concentrating on a certain area?

ANDERS: When the churches were burned...when the churches were burned...no, they're happening all over. When the churches were burned, I hired men and we put them...we had 68 nigger Baptist churches in Adams County. I had men on every Baptist church Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday night for two weeks. Then, on Tuesday night another church was burned. They knew exactly where we were. They knew everything about it. They knew when we were there and everything.

JOHNSON: Other than these two instances, out of the many, many instances that have happened, why is it out in the county instead of in the city.

ANDERS: Well, I think because the police protection. I think that J. T. has a lot more men than I do and that it's impossible for me to watch all the churches over there.

JOHNSON: Well, could it be that, actually, the majority of these few people were doing all these damage...property damage and whatnot around here and that most of them come from the county? Is that true?

ANDERS: I think that. I really do. 'Course now, of the many...Governor, let's say this. Let's say, of the many instances we've had...we had the Negro shooting and we've had three churches burned in the county.

JOHNSON: [inaudible]

ANDERS: In the county, that's right. They were taken...every one of them was followed, though, from one of the plants in Natchez. All of the leads we got would come right back to one of the plants in Natchez. The first Negro that was beaten came from Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company, was followed from the plant to the county. The Negro undertaker was called from the city to the county. The Negro was picked up at International Paper Mill, was taken from the International Paper Mill to the county. Every one of them had been called from the city to the county are taken out in the county, and I think that's because of, if you got ready to beat somebody, it'd be a lot better to take them where there's nobody than to be where there's people driving along all the time.

JOHNSON: Do you feel, Odell, that there are any members of the Klan in your office.

ANDERS: I know it isn't. I know it is not.

JOHNSON: Or on your staff.

ANDERS: Now, I know it isn't.

JOHNSON: Why do you say now?

ANDERS: Well, it might have been at one time, but it isn't anymore.

JOHNSON: Do you have complete confidence in every man working for you that you tell...pass information on to him that pertains to this thing?

ANDERS: Every man that I have working for me.

JOHNSON: I was going to say, if you don't, tonight's the time to get rid of him.

ANDERS: Every man that I have, I have complete confidence in him.

???: Now, Odell, that doesn't include your auxiliaries, now.

ANDERS: Then they don't get any information.

???: Well, but, I mean that may be what the Governor's referring to.

ANDERS: I have me, David [Blou], Guy Smith, Pete Haley, Harry Boles, my brother, and Will [Geretta]. Seven men that I know that nothing exists there in any way whatsoever.

JOHNSON: What do you think should be done?

ANDERS: Well, now, I don't know what should be done, but I, I mean, like I say, I know as long as we have these men, your troopers, in here, nothing can happen. And I think that they should be here, and, like I told them the other day, they said, "All you have to do is ask us." I told them they had a standing invitation to be in Adams County. I want them in Adams County.

JOHNSON: The thing about it, Odell, it's costing the state hundreds of thousands of dollars every day.

ANDERS: I think that and I think this that it's...

JOHNSON: And we can't do that.

ANDERS: ...and as long as you have...

JOHNSON: [inaudible] communities.

ANDERS: Let me...let me...let me tell you what I think should happen.

JOHNSON: [inaudible] keep them here.

ANDERS: I said let me tell you what I think should happen. I think that you, right now I don't think that, I mean, it's common knowledge that the patrol is in here. I don't think that anybody's going to do anything. I don't think they'll have anything in their car or anything like that now. But, I do think that, if you'll pull your patrol out and, then, bring them in and don't let anybody know your coming in, meet somewhere at 12 o'clock, go out and search all the cars. Hit it, maybe, one night or two nights and, then, pull out and, then, come back another three nights and things like that. But as long as these people who are committing these crimes know that you're here and will be here, of course, it will eliminate any more crimes. I'll say that. But, as far as catching them, I don't think you'll catch them there. I mean, that's you uniform patrol.

JOHNSON: Well, what we've got to do now, our main job, is to see that no other crimes happen. The pressure is on from all over the United States. And that's the number one thing. The second thing that we've got to do is to catch these people. That's secondary.

ANDERS: Well, let me say this, Governor. That I can't, because I don't have enough...I don't have enough money to...to do it. But even if I had the money, I couldn't hire men that would do the job. Because you just don't go out and pick somebody up to do it. I mean, and people with families and things like that, they just won't do it even if I had the money. And I think the only solution for me in this county is through you.

JOHNSON: Well, Sheriff, let me ask you this, and let me ask you, Chief, this. You know how many units we have here.

ROBINSON: Right.

JOHNSON: You know how I have those units assigned.

ROBINSON: Yes, sir.

JOHNSON: Do you think we're getting the proper coverage out of the units...I know we're getting all we can out of what we've got, but is that...don't you think...

ROBINSON: Governor, I'll tell you...I do, because, I'll tell you, what the average person don't realize...but ever since I've been on the police department...which has been since 1947...the city of Natchez has never had enough men. I

mean, every shift has worked short all the time. They do it all the time. When you take a town that...with 27,000 people in it...they claim 27,000 and something...which we're close to 35,000, I believe...and we...it's not a business, house in the city of Natchez that a police car don't go by one, two, three and four times a night. Now, when something happens like it happened at Mr. Nosser's house, if we would had an armed robbery at that time, any place, shape, form, or fashion, there wouldn't have been any car to cover it. I had all three cars operating. I had one at Willie Washington's house and two at Mr. Nosser's house. And including myself, which is the fourth car, I'd have been there. I was at Mr. Nosser's house. We have had good, law-abiding citizens here in Natchez for years and years, and this has come upon us all at one time. And last year, during the election, I asked for six additional men from...to bring my shifts up to ten men on each shift. I mean rotating shifts, Governor. From two to ten, ten to six, and six to two. The police department in Natchez does things that they don't do in Jackson or Vicksburg. We work all these schools. And there's a policeman...there's a patrolman out there that morning...so most of our men are working morning time. They're not working evenings and nights. The other night there was eight men out. Now, if you just get to thinking, there was one...two men in car two, two men in car four, and a man in car three and myself. We had a man on Franklin and a man on Main Street [inaudible]. That's eight men. And you cannot patrol the town if you've got any violence, any crime, that's really, that amounts to anything. This petty stuff, fighting and disturbing the peace and cuttings and things like that are just minor stuff. That's routine. But when you have some major crime that happens and you throw your whole reserve in it. I worked that evening shift that night, all night long, and have been working every since Mr. Nosser's house was bombed. But, you know...

JOHNSON: What about...do you have any auxiliary police?

ROBINSON: Yes, sir. I got...I got 13.

JOHNSON: Why can't they be assigned to these guard crossings and...?

ROBINSON: Well, Governor, they usually, they usually work...they usually work at a plant or a garage or some kind of job uptown, and they usually come in the afternoons. The night that Mr. Nosser's was bombed I had four auxiliary men out, and we put them on corners directing traffic that night which is, just like Odell was saying, you can't, you know, all at once train them overnight. And, Governor, this, Mr. Nosser's bombing...you know how you'd have a premonition? I was looking for something to happen. I was looking for it ever since they threw the stink bombs, but I was looking at it on his store. I wasn't looking at his house. Willie Washington's house. Willie Washington don't even [enter] the question to me. I can't understand how he gets in it.

JOHNSON: J. T., don't you think what I said about the political, don't you think that's the way it is?

ROBINSON: I sure do, Governor.

??? Let me say this. I've worked with both these departments coordinating when I can. I've talked with the mayor on the side. There's no question but that there are two law departments, the sheriff's department and your police. And there's a certain amount of natural friction that exists between them and always will. I think this is bound to be true in any community in the state. Now, I find, just as they both say, they both came to the same conclusion independent of each other. There are, in this county, two groups, and they are very small groups, that's behind what we have had happen here in the last two months. One group is a Klan group. It's a dedicated Klan group. It's dedicated to white supremacy, abolition of the Negro race and that sort of thing. The mayor...one group is anti-mayor, the other group is anti-police. The sheriff said earlier that they were politically oriented toward these two men. Well, I prefer to think they're anti [inaudible].

??? I think so, too.

??? The anti-mayor group is the dedicated Klan group. These men are intent only on fascist type of control, doing away with the Negro, eliminating the Negro. They're a very small group. [inaudible] the ones who are dedicated on this. I know...I have a man's name that I prefer. When I think of this group, I use his name in conjunction with it. The other group, I think of a man who is uppermost in that group who is a hoodlum. He is a man who has run houses of prostitution. He is a man who is deeply involved in gambling. He is a man who has been run out of an adjoining state, because he was so low. Now...

JOHNSON: What is he doing now?

??? Right now, his...his open and [inaudible] occupation. He has a legitimate business as a front. But he is, right now, involved in prostitution in this community. Now, this man is anti-police, because the police have frowned on his illegal activities right along. He is not pro-mayor by any means, but he is certainly anti-police. Therefore, what comes up is this. You get a curious overlapping of instances here. You'll have a man's house bombed. Now, the mayor's house, the last time it was bombed, could have been done by either one of these two groups. It could have been done to discredit the police department, or it could have been done as anti-mayor action. You see what I mean?

JOHNSON: Or it could have been done...

??? By COFO.

JOHNSON: [inaudible] act to take the heat off the McComb area.

??? Well, that's...that is possible, too. I...that's a third alternative, Mayor. What I'm saying is this.

JOHNSON: Let me say this. I said it could have taken place as an act to direct our attention away from the McComb situation.

??? Let me say this, too, at this point, that about a month ago, I have two boys that, I think, will do anything in the world illegally or anything else, that are members of the Klan. And I've got those and I'm paying them, and they can't bring me any information or they're not bringing me any information. They claim that they don't know that the Klan, itself, is not doing this, but splinter groups from the Klan.

???: Well, now, that's what, Odell, I was trying to bring up. I agree with both these men that this is purely a local, political situation that's causing the instances we're having. The group that's anti-the police chief is not the group who threw the stink bombs in the Mayor's business and in the Jordan Auto Company. That's not the group that did that. The group that did that is the anti-mayor group. The Klan group, every time we've had an act of violence in this community, Mayor, since these beatings now, this is something else. But in the past four months, every act of violence we've had has come immediately after a trigger was set off. Something set it off. A letter to the Chief set off an anti-mayor act. The Mayor and Mr. [inaudible] a statement to these northern reporters set off these stink bombs. So, I mean, as I look at it, we...and, actually, these groups are small. I think they're very small. I've said all along. I don't believe we have in our community anywhere near the situation you've got in McComb. I've talked with good friends of mine in McComb, and you've got a situation there...I think you've got a large percentage of your White population over there who actually feel like these COFO Negroes brought this on themselves, and they're getting what they deserve. And that is not true in this community.

??? That's right, Governor.

???: I'd say the vast majority of your White population here is just absolutely appalled at what's going on here, and they don't think it has anything to do with the racial situation. They really don't. And I don't believe it has it has very much to do with the racial situation.

[inaudible] [Everyone speaking at one time]

??? There was a man that came to me and told me that these two churches was burned...bombed to get the heat off of Philadelphia.

???: A lot of that's speculation, but, this McComb situation, I've talked to the...I've got good friends over there. I went over there dove hunting, and I talked with five or six men at that time who were just common, ordinary businessmen over there, and they all indicated to me...I was a little bit shocked at their attitude. It's not the attitude you run into uptown here in Natchez. Their attitude over there was, well, these Negroes are getting just what they deserve.

[inaudible] [Everyone speaking at one time]

JOHNSON: Most of them stayed in the dark until the situation got completely out of hand and that's the thing we don't want to happen here.

??? Governor, nothing has...

JOHNSON: [We don't want] people here to be in the dark.

??? Nothing that's happened in Natchez has been in the dark. Everything in Natchez has been known. Everything in Natchez has been known. Where in other counties it hadn't, everything in Natchez that has been happening, you know about it. And the public knows about it. Every bit of it.

JOHNSON: How quickly do they call and let you know?

ROBINSON Governor, I'll tell you. On one incident, I didn't get called on the shooting of the [truck]. It happened about four-thirty...between four-thirty and five o'clock in the morning, and I didn't get called until a quarter after seven.

JOHNSON: That's the trouble in McComb that you're not getting the cooperation from your local people to call and report these things in time for them to catch them before they get...

ROBINSON: Right, Governor.

JOHNSON: ...going.

ROBINSON: Governor, let me throw a little more light on this as Edmond was talking there. That's what...that's the reason I feel like it's more political than it is racial. Because COFO headquarters was right next door to Jake [Frishman's] place and Jake [Frishman's] place burned to the ground. And didn't anything happen to COFO. COFO was staying at number nine St. Catherine, which this letter come out on me...I was supposed to have had a

Negro whore there at number nine, St. Catherine street. And there's nothing happened at number nine, St. Catherine.

NOSSER: Well, Chief, what would be the politics involved at Jake [Frishman's]? That's what...

ROBINSON: Mr. John...

NOSSER: [inaudible] politics in that.

ROBINSON: That's the reason I say...that's the reason it's not...it couldn't be racial, because Jake [Frishman's] not doing anything now...

??? Well, I can tell what it is, Mayor. Up until that happened, nothing had happened in the city.

??? That's right.

??? And this...the word was going around town that nothing was going to happen in the city. That it was all going to be contained in the county, and, therefore, they had to do something, because the Chief...the people who were the anti-chief group decided they wanted to slap him in the face with something, so they burned Jake's [place].

JOHNSON: Do you think they would go to that extent?

??? Yes, sir

??? Yes, sir, they will.

??? Mr. John, I feel like people that we deal with like this are the dirtiest, lowest class people in the world. And you...and they're not the people that you meet Sunday morning in the churches.

??? The people that are bombing you, Mayor, are bombing you, because they're anti-you. They're anti-John Nosser. And it's political.

??? The people that wrote the thing are anti-J. T. Why would they come out with a letter? If he were running for an office or something, now, they might come out with a letter. For no reason they come out with a letter

ROBINSON: That's right, Mr. [Johnny]. It wasn't anything come out on me in the election.

NOSSER: The bombing of my house couldn't have been done by Colored, I'm telling

you. [inaudible] and I was the cause of [inaudible]. I was the cause of keeping the NAACP from having a meeting here. And they got aroused about that, but [inaudible] Washington. They're cussing me out in front of Willie Washington. Why couldn't it have been their bombing me instead of Whites? I don't know.

ROBINSON: Well, John, it could have. It's possible that it could have. But I think it's...I think it's more political than it was racial. Now, they...that...Jessie Bernard got on you by selling Goldwater hats. She [inaudible] selling Goldwater hats up there in the store. And she cussed Willie Washington out. And, when we arrested them ourselves down there on a vagrancy charge, they...you've never seen more niggers in your life. I was even...Governor, the nigger girl told me, when I told her we were going to put her back in the back, she said, "Well, Mr. Robinson, I was born and raised here. You going to put me in jail?" I said, "That's right." And you know what she told me? She said, "I would a heap rather spend my time in this office with you." Now, that's a COFO worker. And I told her she couldn't do that. And I put her in jail.

NOSSER: Well, Chief, let me tell you now. Isn't it a fact that, during the mayor's race the first time in 1962 and all during my administration and all during the campaign for reelection the first time and the second time...that's three solid years...that my political opponent's spreading the word on me that I'm a nigger lover. Right?

ROBINSON: Oh, yes, sir.

NOSSER: Alright. So, where's the politics in that? These people list...these handful of people are being pumped with hate and prejudice thinking that I am wanting to integrate the races up here.

[inaudible] [Everyone speaking at one time]

??? And, Mayor, as I pointed out, the group that's attacking you is a Klan group. They are a white supremacist group. The group that's attacking the Chief here is composed almost exclusively of people who are just plain criminals and hoodlums and they have only their personal gain at heart. They have absolutely [inaudible] say this. There are Negroes in that group. They are working hand in hand, White and Colored in that group. And [inaudible] is purely and simply a criminal group.

JOHNSON: Is it possible then, fellows, that you all have narrowed it down to groups like that?

[inaudible] [Everyone speaking at one time]

??? ...I call them the [hate] boys.

JOHNSON: ...that you can't then, maybe, through these undercover men with the State Department?

??? I gave it to the Governor's men when they were here before. They know who they are. The Governor knows who they are. The FBI knows who they are.

JOHNSON: ...just draw a line to decide which group is doing [inaudible]

ROBINSON: A two-fifteen in the morning, I talked to some of these groups, and I talked to them, and at the next evening, I got a report from number nine at St. Catherine. I talked to them at less than one block from number nine at St. Catherine. And the nigger that lives at number nine at St. Catherine...who is a working nigger, Governor. It's a rooming house, but COFO stays there...told me that three white men was in his yard at two-thirty in the morning. And I talked to these fellows, this hoodlum group, between two-fifteen and two-thirty in the morning one block away. One block away. And I feel sure that these three that I talked to...I talked to four, but three of them were seen in that yard...and, Governor, I believe it was them, and I believed they were going to do something at number nine at St. Catherine. And I put number nine at St. Catherine on our spot list to see what they're going to do. Governor, I'll tell you, I don't hold any political animosity towards Odell or the Mayor.

??? I don't think you do.

ROBINSON: I run my campaign for myself. I didn't back anybody and I didn't fight anybody.

??? This man doesn't, and I don't.

[inaudible] [Everyone speaking at one time]

??? I mean a natural friction that always exists when you've got two law enforcement agencies, and their territory overlaps. The same friction exists between the federal authorities and the state authorities.

ANDERS: I think J. T. will tell you the very same thing.

??? ...there is some friction there and there always will be.

ANDERS: That the day that I took Sheriff of Adams County I went to him and I said, "J. T., you have the men, you have the know-how, you have the automobiles to work the city. You work the city, and I'll work the county."

I turned it over to him. The only thing that I asked him to let me know is when there's a crime committed, a felony, so that I'd know about it in the county. It's the other part I don't care about knowing about it. I don't have time to know about it. But, as far as us working together, as far as my group working with him, we have given him and will continue to give him everything that we have.

??? Let me say this, too, Governor, just to answer your question that you asked, "How can the patrol help on this?" Now, I agree with the Sheriff wholeheartedly. You can't afford to keep your patrol in here and keep this county under lock and key. I mean, it's obvious. Nobody can afford to do that. Alright, the only other solution, as I see it, is just what he suggested, spot raids on the kind of not...you know, when I say raid, I mean come in and just set up roadblocks on a spot basis on a certain night. If you can do that, come in periodically and just let these people know that they may just happen to be picked the wrong night and if they do, they're going to get caught.

ANDERS: And don't let J. T., me, the Mayor or anybody know when you're coming in here.

NOSSER: And, in the meantime, you'll subject the people of this community to more violence and more killing

[inaudible] [Everyone speaking at one time]

??? Mayor, let me tell you something. They can't leave these men in here indefinitely.

[inaudible] [Everyone speaking at one time]

NOSSER: [inaudible] I'm not going to tell them to pull the troopers out of here when I know it's not wise to [inaudible]

??? I said [inaudible] keep him from it, and it will, Mayor, but, as far as solving it, they're solving what has been passed already. Leaving the troopers in here won't solve that.

??? Mayor, if you keep the troops in here for three months and you pull them out, it'll happen again.

[inaudible]

??? You can keep from having [more]. That's right.

[inaudible] [Everyone talking at one time]

??? I'm not going to tell him to do that. It's up to him.

[inaudible]

ROBINSON: Governor, I don't trust them. And I mean I let him know I don't trust them. He was squatting down up against the wall and he said, "Well", said, "All these state cars you got in here", said...I want you to listen to the way he [stutters] [inaudible] his remarks [inaudible] said, "All the state troopers you got in here", said, "Nothing going to happen now. There ain't nothing going to happen while they're in here."

NOSSER: I'll tell you, when they letting you pull the state troopers out of here, and you have another killing or bombing, you're going to have federal troops down here.

[inaudible] [Everyone speaking at one time]

NOSSER: Well, let me tell you something. When they put a stop to this [inaudible] here, it'll stop all over the state.

END OF RECORDING